

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 8, and 9 are pending in this application. By the Office Action, claims 1-5, 8, and 9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103. By this Amendment, claim 1 has been amended, and claims 5 and 6 have been canceled without prejudice.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for indicating that claim 6 contains allowable subject matter. Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the allowable subject matter of claim 6 (and the subject matter of intervening claim 5). Therefore, support for these amendments may be found, for example, in canceled claims 5 and 6. No new matter is added.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration; and (c) do not present any additional claims without canceling a corresponding number of finally rejected claims. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Office Action rejects claims 1-5, 8, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Imahashi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,350,643, hereinafter "Imahashi"). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection.

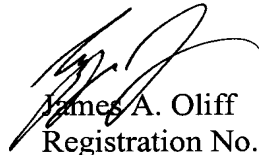
Without agreeing with or acquiescing to the rejection, Applicant notes that claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 6, which the Examiner acknowledges contains allowable subject matter (*see* page 6 of the Office Action). Specifically, the Examiner indicated that claim 6 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Therefore, Applicant submits that Imahashi fails to disclose or to have rendered obvious all of the elements of claim 1 (and dependent claims 2-4, 8, and 9). Thus, Imahashi would not have rendered obvious claims 1-4, 8, and 9. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection are respectfully requested.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-4, 8, and 9 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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